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Software Developer, Cybersecurity Analyst.

Towards a *Federal Football Association (FFA)*

A Plea for a Federation of States in Africa South of the Sahara (FASS) Inspired by the National Basketball Association

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About The Author

Djibril Chimère Diaw

Software Developer, Cybersecurity Analyst.

Dedication

To

my mother Marème Fall

my father Amadou Chimère Diaw

my wife Isabelle Diaw

my children

Fatou-Chimère Diaw, Ahmadou-Chimère Diaw,

Marième-Chimère Diaw, Aïssata-Chimère Diaw .

my grandparents

Fatou Methiour Ndiaye & Waly Sega Fall

Fatou Faye & Souleymane Chimère Diaw

Teachers

To those who shall come into the world a century after me, beginning in the year two thousand and seventy-two.

To all mothers,
to those who made our coming into the world possible through the gift of themselves,
to those who, even today, carry, give birth to, nourish, protect, and raise life,
to those who, tomorrow, will continue to open the path of human existence.

To all women who, in silence or in light, have risked their bodies, their strength, and sometimes their lives so that humanity may endure.
To their quiet courage, their daily resilience, and their founding love.

May this work stand as an act of recognition,
a tribute passed on from generation to generation,
and a word of gratitude addressed to those without whom nothing would have been, nothing is, and nothing will be.

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ENGLISH

Editorial Preface

This volume advances a deliberately unconventional proposition: that the pathway toward a **Federation of African States south of the Sahara** may be meaningfully prefigured through the institutional reorganization of professional football. Rather than approaching federal integration solely through constitutional engineering, diplomatic treaties, or ideological proclamations, this work argues for a functional, practice-based entry point—one grounded in a domain of exceptional social legitimacy, economic relevance, and transnational resonance.

Football occupies a singular position in Africa south of the Sahara. It is simultaneously a mass cultural practice, a labor market, an industry, a vector of international visibility, and a powerful mechanism of collective identification. Unlike many formal political arenas, it already operates across borders in the imaginaries, careers, and consumption patterns of hundreds of millions of people. This empirical reality invites a fundamental question: if large-scale coordination, redistribution, regulation, and shared governance are already socially accepted in football, why should this sector not serve as a laboratory for federal organization?

The proposed **Federal Football Association (FFA)** draws explicit inspiration from the **National Basketball Association (NBA)**, not as a model to be imitated mechanically, but as proof of concept. The NBA demonstrates that a sports league can function as a de facto federation: combining centralized revenue collection, interterritorial redistribution, unified governance, competitive regulation, and coherent global projection, while encompassing diverse local entities with distinct identities and interests. Transposed to the context of Africa south of the Sahara, such an architecture suggests the feasibility of a continental football institution capable of aggregating markets, stabilizing revenues, retaining talent, and exercising collective bargaining power on a global scale.

This preface situates the book as a **normative and analytical intervention**. Normative, because it openly argues that institutional fragmentation—not demographic scale, economic potential, or cultural diversity—constitutes the principal constraint on collective power in Africa south of the Sahara. Analytical, because it grounds this argument in functional reasoning rather than abstraction, focusing on mechanisms, incentives, governance structures, and empirical plausibility. The FFA is thus not presented as an end in itself, but as an institutional lever: a means of translating existing social and economic masses into organized, durable, and visible collective capacity.

More broadly, the work invites readers to reconsider how federations emerge historically. Rather than being solely the product of grand political bargains, federations often crystallize through repeated practices of cooperation in domains where coordination proves immediately beneficial. In this sense, football is not peripheral to political economy; it is a strategic sector through which principles of federal governance—solidarity, rule harmonization, shared arbitration, and collective investment—can be tested, normalized, and eventually generalized.

The ambition of this book is therefore neither rhetorical nor speculative. It seeks to contribute to serious debates on integration, sovereignty, and scale in the twenty-first century by advancing a concrete, operational hypothesis: that a **Federal Football Association** could constitute one of the most credible institutional stepping stones toward a **Federation of African States south of the Sahara**, rooted not in discourse alone, but in practice, performance, and collective experience.

General Introduction

The question of political and institutional integration in Africa south of the Sahara is most often approached through the lens of states, treaties, intergovernmental organizations, or pan-African ideologies. These approaches, while legitimate, repeatedly encounter the same difficulty: they presuppose a degree of political convergence and institutional trust that is precisely lacking in a historically fragmented space, marked by the colonial legacy, the multiplicity of formal sovereignties, and the weakness of effective supranational coordination mechanisms. In this context, integration is conceived as an abstract objective rather than as a functional process rooted in concrete social practices.

This advocacy text proposes a deliberate analytical shift. It is based on the hypothesis that political federalization can only emerge sustainably if it is preceded, or at least accompanied, by functional federalization in domains endowed with strong social legitimacy, high visibility, and a powerful capacity for aggregation. Professional sport, and football in particular, constitutes in this respect a singular strategic field. In Africa south of the Sahara, football is one of the rare spaces in which state borders are already symbolically porous, where local and transnational identities coexist, and where demographic, economic, and cultural masses are expressed simultaneously.

The example of the National Basketball Association (NBA) demonstrates that a sports league can function as a genuine operational federation: centralization of revenues, interterritorial redistribution, common regulation, unified governance, and coherent international projection. Transposed to African football, such a model opens the way to the creation of a **Federal Football Association (FFA)**, conceived not as a mere sporting reform, but as a federal institutional infrastructure in embryo. The FFA is thus envisaged as a space of continental coordination capable of articulating populations, markets, territories, and common rules, and of prefiguring, through practice, a **Federation of States in Africa south of the Sahara** founded on efficiency, solidarity, and critical mass.

Towards a *Federal Football Association (FFA)*

A Plea for a Federation of States in Africa South of the Sahara (FASS) Inspired by the National Basketball Association

Abstract

This article presents an academic plea for the creation of a **Federal Football Association (FFA)** conceived as a continental federal sports institution inspired by the organizational and economic model of the *National Basketball Association (NBA)*, and designed as an institutional matrix for a future **Federation of States in Africa south of the Sahara**. The central argument is that football, as a total social fact, constitutes one of the rare domains capable of aligning demographic masses, productive capacities, collective identities, and integrated governance. By analyzing the limits of the current framework based on national federations and by demonstrating the systemic virtues of a federal sports model, the article argues that the FFA could function as an institutional, economic, and political laboratory for a gradual, realistic African federalization grounded in observable facts.

1. Introduction: Sport as a Latent Political Infrastructure

In contemporary history, certain non-political institutions have preceded, prepared, or enabled advanced forms of political integration. Professional sport, once it reaches a critical mass, belongs to this category. The *National Basketball Association* constitutes a major precedent in this regard: a private, trans-state league operating at the scale of a federal state, functioning as an integrated system of production, redistribution, regulation, and symbolic representation.

Africa south of the Sahara possesses a comparable, if not superior, structural asset: football. No other domain combines to such an extent popular intensity, social transversality, transnational circulation, and international projection capacity. Yet this potential remains fragmented by an inherited institutional framework based on weakly coordinated and economically suboptimal national federations.

This article advances the following thesis: **the creation of a Federal Football Association (FFA), structured on federal and continental foundations, can constitute the first functional core of a Federation of States in Africa south of the Sahara**.

2. Structural Limits of the Current National Federation Model

2.1 Institutional Fragmentation

African football is currently organized around sovereign national federations, loosely coordinated by continental confederations. This model mechanically reproduces existing political borders without taking into account:

- real demographic masses,
- regional economic basins,
- player migration flows,
- integrated media markets.

The result is a form of **systemic inefficiency**: multiplication of fixed costs, weak resource pooling, economically non-viable national competitions, and chronic dependence on external funding.

2.2 Underexploitation of Economic Mass

Taken separately, most national leagues south of the Sahara do not reach the critical size required to generate:

- significant broadcasting revenues,
- financial stability for clubs,
- long-term retention of talent.

Taken together, however, they constitute a **considerable sporting, demographic, and market mass**, which today remains dispersed.

3. The NBA Model: A Functional Federation Before a Political One

The NBA is not merely a sports league. It rests on key institutional principles:

1. **Centralization of major revenues** (broadcasting rights, global sponsorship).
2. **Federal redistribution** through revenue-sharing mechanisms.
3. **Common regulation** (salary cap, draft, contractual standards).
4. **Strong collective identity** transcending local identities.
5. **Unified international projection**.

These mechanisms have made it possible to transform a diversity of states, cities, and markets into an **integrated economic system**, without abolishing local identities.

4. Proposal: Institutional Architecture of a Federal Football Association (FFA)

4.1 Fundamental Principle

The FFA would be a **continental federal league**, not as an immediate replacement for states, but as a functional layer above national federations.

4.2 Territorial Organization

- Division into **regional federal conferences** (West, Central, East, South).
- Club franchises selected on economic, demographic, and sporting criteria.
- Regulated mobility of clubs and players at the federal scale.

4.3 Governance

- A federal council of the FFA representing the regions.
- An independent central authority in charge of economic and sporting rules.
- A single federal arbitration system (discipline, finance, transfers).

4.4 Economic Model

- Pooling of continental media rights.
- A federal investment fund for infrastructure and training.
- Redistribution mechanisms ensuring the viability of the entire system.

5. The FFA as a Laboratory of Political Federalization

5.1 Institutional Learning

An FFA would function as:

- a **de facto federation**,
- with a common budget,
- shared rules,
- central arbitration,
- interterritorial redistribution.

In other words, the very mechanisms of a federal state, applied to a non-ideological and socially consensual field.

5.2 Popular Legitimacy

Unlike many abstract political projects, football benefits from:

- immediate legitimacy,
- transnational popular appropriation,
- massive emotional mobilization capacity.

The FFA would thus allow the **federal idea to be naturalized**, making it lived before being theorized.

6. Implications for a Federation of States in Africa South of the Sahara

The central thesis of this article is that **political federalization cannot succeed without prior functional federalization**. The FFA would offer:

- a credible institutional precedent,
- proof of economic feasibility,
- a space of inter-state trust,
- an unprecedented alignment between population, production, and governance.

In the long run, the logics implemented in the sporting field could be transposed to other domains: energy, transport, research, financial markets.

7. Objections and Responses

7.1 Risk of Loss of Sovereignty

The FFA would not abolish national federations; it would embed them within a more efficient overarching framework, in the same way that U.S. states operate within the NBA.

7.2 Initial Inequalities

The federal model precisely allows asymmetries to be corrected through redistribution, unlike the current fragmented model.

8. Conclusion: From Football to the Federal State

This article argues that the **Federal Football Association** should not be conceived as a mere sporting reform, but as a **latent political infrastructure**. In a context where Africa south of the Sahara possesses considerable demographic and human masses yet remains politically fragmented, football offers a unique terrain on which to experiment with pragmatic, gradual, and empirically grounded federalization.

The FFA could thus become what the NBA has been for North American sport: not only a league, but a **functional federal system**, prefiguring a **Federation of States in Africa south of the Sahara** capable of transforming potential power into effective power.

Transversal Conclusion

The advocacy for a **Federal Football Association (FFA)** rests on a central intuition: the major obstacle to the federalization of Africa south of the Sahara is neither demographic, nor economic, nor cultural, but institutional and procedural. Human masses exist, talent is abundant, and markets are real; what is lacking are credible mechanisms capable of transforming these masses into organized collective power. In this sense, football is not a detour, but a strategic shortcut.

Following the model of the NBA, the FFA would provide a concrete, intelligible, and immediately operational federal framework within which key principles of federation—partial centralization, redistribution, common rules, supranational arbitration, and interterritorial solidarity—could be tested without requiring, at least initially, a formal renunciation of state sovereignties. It would make it possible to move from a logic of national juxtaposition to a logic of an integrated system, while relying on a domain that enjoys exceptional popular legitimacy.

Beyond sport, the scope of the project is eminently political and systemic. A functional FFA would create a major institutional precedent: empirical proof that continental federal governance can generate stability, economic value, equity, and international visibility. It would constitute a space of collective learning, in which states, private actors, and populations would experience federal cooperation in concrete terms, prior to any constitutional formalization.

Ultimately, the **Federal Football Association** should not be seen as an end in itself, but as a lever. A lever to align demography, production, and governance. A lever to naturalize the federal idea through use rather than discourse. And finally, a lever to place the **Federation of States in Africa south of the Sahara** on a realistic, progressive, and fact-based trajectory, by transforming an existing social and cultural capital—football—into the matrix of a collective political power that remains, for the most part, to be built.